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NIKON HAD 2 AIDES FIGHT NEWS LEAKS

Ziegler Confirms '71 Role of 'White House Plumbers'

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12

The White House confirmed today that a two-man investigative team, known jokingly as the White House plumbers, worked during 1971 at trying to plug news leaks concerning "national security affairs" and had a private telephone.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said in response to questions that the two aides, David Young and Egil Krogh Jr., had been assigned to investigate a "series of news reports relating to a great extent to national security affairs."

A private phone—that is, one that was not connected through the White House switchboard—was put in for their use and the use of persons wishing to provide information to them, he said.

'Highest Levels'

Mr. Ziegler said that "the concert regarding the leaks reached into the highest levels of this Administration," a phrase generally assumed to refer to the President himself.

In response to further questions, Mr. Ziegler said that it was his understanding that E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy had not been involved in the project and that Bernard J. Barker had not been called on the private telephone.

All three men are defendants in the Watergate case and have been linked in newspaper reports with a group called the White House plumbers.

Mr. Ziegler said that "to attempt to associate this with anything that happened after January of 1972, in fact, through suggestion or through association with individuals who fell into bad times later in the year of 1972, would be folly on the part of those who attempted to do that."

He also said that John D. Ehrlichman, head of the Domestic Council, had been unaware that the bills for the private telephone were paid by his office. Mr. Krogh, who was nominated Saturday as Under Secretary of Transportation, and Mr. Young were on Mr. Ehrlichman's staff.

Leaks Not Specified

Mr. Ziegler would not say specifically what news leaks the Administration had been concerned about. He declined to say whether the publication by the columnist Jack Anderson of confidential White House memos dealing with the India-Pakistan conflict was included.

He said that the problem had now been cleared up "to a great extent" and that the "project" had come to an end in "early 1972."

Earlier, Mr. Ziegler announced a series of second-term changes in the Departments of Agriculture and Defense.

He said that J. Phil Campbell would remain as Under Secretary of Agriculture and that Richard E. Lyng, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture; Thomas K. Cowden, Assistant Secretary for Rural Development and Conservation; Edward M. Shulman, general counsel, and James V. Smith, administrator of the Farmers Home Administration, would be leaving. Mr. Shulman is retiring, Mr. Ziegler said, and Mr. Lyng and Mr. Cowden have been offered other positions in the department.

Mr. Ziegler also announced that Carroll G. Brunthaver would remain as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Commodity Programs.

Clements to Be Nominated

Mr. Ziegler, confirming continuing speculation, said that William P. Clements Jr. would be nominated for Deputy Secretary of Defense, succeeding Kenneth Rush, who will be nominated to be Deputy Secretary of State.

In a reference to speculation that Mr. Clements was being chosen because his hard-line view of the Soviet Union would offset, if not clash with, the more moderate view of the Defense Secretary-designate, Elliot L. Richardson, Mr. Ziegler was asked if Mr. Richardson had been consulted about the choice of Mr. Clements.

"I'm sure he concurred in it," Mr. Ziegler replied, adding that Mr. Richardson was "very happy with Mr. Clements."

Mr. Clements is chairman of the board of Sedco, Inc., of

Mr. Ziegler parried questions about the President's meeting this morning with W. Clement Stone, the Chicago millionaire whose contributions to the Nixon campaign were the largest for any single donor. Mr. Stone has made no secret of his willingness to accept a major ambassadorial assignment.

Mr. Ziegler said he could not comment on rumors of such an appointment for Mr. Stone, who would, he said, "of course, be highly qualified for such a post." But he added: "I don't think you should jump to any conclusions."

Dr. Robert Q. Marston, a Democrat who has been director of the National Institutes of Health since 1968, said that he was informed today that the President would replace him within the next few months. The institutes are the main Federal agency for conducting and supporting biomedical research.

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White House Links Phone to Leaks Probe

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that a private telephone in the Executive Office Building was used last year to facilitate an investigation of what he called "serious leaks relating to national security affairs."

He told newsmen at a White House briefing yesterday that any attempt to associate the telephone "with anything that happened after Jan. 1, 1972, would be folly because there was no connection whatever."

This was taken as a denial by Ziegler of a published report last week linking a private telephone in the building next to the White House, not connected through the White House switchboard, to E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the defendants in the Watergate bugging case.

Barker Calls Claimed

Asked if the telephone had been used by Hunt, Ziegler said: "I don't know." The press secretary added that he understood Hunt was not involved in the leaks investigation. Then Ziegler indicated, without mentioning the Watergate affair directly, that there was "no connection whatever" between the private telephone and the Watergate incident.

The Washington Post report last week said Hunt, who had been a part-time White House consultant, had used the special telephone for calls to Bernard L. Barker, a codefendant in U.S. District Court here in the Watergate case. Bills for the telephone's use were said to have been sent to the home of a secretary who turned them over to presidential assistant John D. Ehrlichman's office for payment.

In acknowledging the telephone's existence, Ziegler said

today that Egil (Bud) Krogh Jr., a deputy assistant to the President named last week to portation, and David Young, a member of the National Security Council staff, were involved during 1971 in trying to find the source of leaks of NSC papers.

He apparently referred to papers leaked to columnist Jack Anderson, some dealing with controversial U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan.

"We did have a problem, which we attempted to deal with, and did to a degree," Ziegler said. He said some questions about the leaks had been resolved, but others still have not been.

Private Reports

In connection with the NSC leaks investigation, Ziegler said a private telephone was used "so people could report in a confidential way."

He said that payment of the charges for the telephone by Domestic Council staff under Ehrlichman was not known to Ehrlichman.

The White House press secretary said that "it is not a unique circumstance to have a private telephone installed in the White House." Ziegler also asserted that use of the phone he was talking about stopped early this year.